

REMARKS

Claims 1-13 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1, 7 and 8 are amended and claims 10-13 are added. The amendments made to claims 1, 7 and 8 further clarify the subject matter recited in those claims. Support for added claims 10-13 may be found at least at page 16, lines 20-21, page 17, lines 10-14 and Fig. 1 of the specification. No new matter is added. Reconsideration of the application based on the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Applicant appreciates the courtesies shown to Applicant's representatives by Examiners Shabman and Williams during the March 17 personal interview. Applicant's separate record of the summary of the substance of the personal interview is incorporated into the following remarks.

The Office Action rejects claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Claim 8 is amended to obviate this rejection. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of claim 8 under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph are respectfully requested.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-9 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,167,749 to Yanagisawa et al. ("Yanagisawa") in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,203,317 to Gupta. The rejections are respectfully traversed.

As discussed during the personal interview, neither of Yanagisawa nor Gupta can reasonably be considered to teach, or to have suggested, a plurality of pressure monitoring devices that each operate within a different predetermined pressure range, where the fuel gas supply channel is depressurized until the pressure enters the predetermined pressure range in which the pressure can be monitored in the plurality of pressure monitoring devices. Yanagisawa merely teaches that an evacuation pump evacuates an airtight room so that gas leaks may be detected (see col. 1, lines 42-50). There is nothing in Yanagisawa that can reasonably be considered to teach, or to have suggested, depressurizing a fuel gas supply

channel until the pressure in the fuel gas supply channel enters the predetermined pressure range in which pressure can be monitored in a plurality of pressure monitoring devices.

Gupta also fails to make up for this shortfall.

Applicant's representatives presented the above argument to Examiners Shabman and Williams during the March 17 personal interview. Examiner Shabman tentatively agreed that Yanagisawa did not teach such a feature, but indicated that he would have to consider Applicant's position upon submission of a formal response.

For at least the foregoing reasons, no combination of Yanagisawa and Gupta can reasonably be considered to teach, or to have suggested, the combinations of all of the features recited in independent claims 1, 7 and 8. Further, dependent claims 2-6 and 9 would also not have been suggested by the currently-applied references for at least the respective dependence of these claims on independent claims 1 and 8, as well as for the separately patentable subject matter that each of these claims recites.

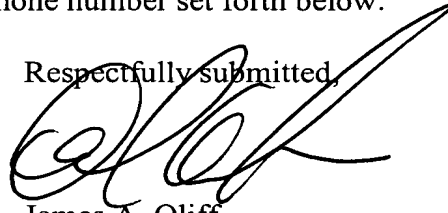
Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1-9 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Yanagisawa and Gupta are respectfully requested.

Additionally, claims 10-13 are in condition for allowance for at least the dependence of these claims, directly or indirectly, on independent claim 1, as well as for the separately patentable subject matter that each of these claims recites.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of claims 1-9 and consideration and allowance of claims 10-13 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's undersigned representative at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Attachment:

Petition for Extension of Time

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